

## **KEEP FIRE DANGER IN MIND THIS HARVEST SEASON**

It is no surprise that this year has been extremely dry and that widespread extreme drought conditions exist over much of Iowa. Now we are heading into harvest season. In fact, some fields are already in harvest or have been harvested.

The National Weather Service would like to remind everyone that this year is different from past harvest seasons and even from past dry harvest seasons. The degree and widespread nature of our current drought have led to a much higher than average fire risk for Iowa fields and surrounding land. The largest cause of fires this time of year is farm equipment setting fields on fire. This year we anticipate that fires will be a big problem and could spread rapidly to surrounding areas and quickly get out of control.

We ask that everyone be mindful of the enhanced fire risk this fall season and take precautions to minimize this risk. Be aware of fire weather watches and warnings for your area. Try not to harvest on windy days. When you are harvesting, be sure to keep your machines clean, remove caked on grease and check coolant and oil levels frequently. Check for and take care of oil leaks. Remove debris from the engine area and locations with bearings, belts or other moving parts and exhaust pipes and keep areas around the fuel tanks and lines free of litter.

Try to avoid outdoor burning especially on days with an elevated fire risk. Heed burn bans if they are issued for your area. Do not throw lit cigarettes into ditches or anywhere near vegetation. Doing so could start a fire that could get quickly out of control. If your activities do result in a spreading fire, do not attempt to fight it yourself—people in Iowa have died this year when trying to put out fires that got away from them. Call 911 immediately.

Fire Departments will be tasked with putting out these fires but it takes time for the fire fighters to arrive. They must assemble and then travel to the fire. With conditions as dry as they are, the rate of spread of fires could create large fires from a smoldering grass stand within a matter of minutes.

If everyone remains mindful of these facts and makes conscientious decisions about their activities then we will have a safe fall fire weather season.

*—Prepared by National Weather Service Des Moines, Iowa*